

THE LABOUR ORGANISER

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THE SECRETARY'S PAGE

HELP AND HINTS IN SEASON.

Ere these lines are read the great "Daily Herald" Million Campaign — a real red-letter event in Labour's history — will have passed into the limbo of the past. The new "Daily Herald" is here to bear witness of our great effort and to champion mightily in the future the Movement which has fashioned its circulation and its power. But, though "like an election" we are waiting at this moment for "the result," *unlike* an election all is *not* over save the shouting. A really big task lies before us in consolidating and extending the circulation that has been won. And this is a job for the movement, not as some suppose a task to be relegated to an orthodox circulation department. The influence and prestige of the new "Daily Herald" is something that will be derived almost wholly from its Labour association and management. But the success of Labour's forces, the popularity of our cause, perhaps even the fate of our Government, are matters that more, far more than in the past, will be dependant upon the prosperity of our Press, and its grip on the mass of electors. The new big circulation must be maintained and steadily extended. The counter-moves of competitors to regain their lost ground must in turn be countered by continued vigilance and sustained voluntary advertisement of "our" paper. Already almost every paper that has felt the shock of the Big Push is alive to new schemes and fresh stunts to win back the old readers. Good though the new "Daily Herald" is to be, and able by its own merits to retain readers and their goodwill, it is not in the interests of the Labour movement to leave matters there and to march off the forces just when the counter-attack may be expected. Few publicity efforts are so effective as voluntary advertisement and announcements; so let us continue. *Further, nothing will retain new members so effectively as inducing each one to take in the "Daily Herald."* We should like to see this suggestion adopted in all membership

campaigns, and in another issue we shall suggest plans to make it effective.

Meanwhile a tremendous opportunity faces Local Parties as a result of this Million Campaign. New readers should be again canvassed and individually invited to become members of the Party. The canvass will do no harm where the new readers are already Party members, for there is a definite value in new readers getting a further visit from our canvassers after they have had a trial of the paper. Indeed, we urge this course apart from the objective of membership. From the purely selfish standpoint this procedure has its advantages, for Local Parties have everything to gain by the new enrolments feeling satisfied with the paper and fulfilling their promise to take it regularly. Local organisers and secretaries should now begin to lay plans to reap the real harvest of the late campaign, and membership will now be found far easier to get.

From time to time many new secretaries write us asking how they may obtain information on various points, and it has long been apparent to us that a number of facilities afforded by the Movement for the spread of information are unsufficiently known among those to whom these services should be of incalculable value. Some of our correspondents in fact have complained of the absence of certain types of publications apparently all unaware that these have been in existence for some time. It may therefore be of interest for us to enumerate the various publications published by the Party, apart from its pamphlets and leaflets, that are expressly intended for service within the Movement.

The "Labour Press Service" is probably known to the bulk of our readers and this Service may be obtained on application, where it is intended to use the information contained therein.

either in Local Party papers or by securing insertion in local newspapers.

The Trades Union Congress publish a similar press service known as the "Industrial News." The Labour Party Research Department publish monthly the "Labour Bulletin" at the price of threepence, and this is a compendium of statistical matter of prime value to the student and propagandist. As an illustration of contents we give those below for March, 1930:—

Short Bibliography of Local Government.

The 1930 Unemployment Insurance Act.

Is Agriculture Depressed?

Local Government Act Advice.

Poor Relief Scales.

A Municipal Loans Bureau?

Oil Combines.

Analysis of Unemployment.

Children Under School Age.

By-election Results, June-December, 1929.

Profit-Sharing.

Labour Government Record.

Company News.

Statistics.

Quite a number of people are also apparently unaware of the "Weekly Notes for Speakers." Each set of "Weekly Notes" contains an average of six cards of a size handy for the pocket and for use on the platform. The facts contained in the "Weekly Notes" are invariably reliable and authentic, and the information the speaker receives in concentrated form provides a basis for a great deal of platform work every week.

A newcomer among Party publications is the Labour Party "League of Youth Monthly Bulletin." This has now been in publication for eight or nine months and is issued by the Labour Party Press and Publicity Department. A copy may be obtained on application and the Bulletin is proving of great service as the special organ within the Party of the revived Youth Movement.

Another useful publication not under the direct auspices of the Party, but published by the Fabian Society in conjunction with the Labour Party, is the "Local Government News" of special service to elected persons.

The "Labour Magazine" is another publication which ranks well among political periodicals. It is the official monthly journal of the Labour Movement and is published jointly by the

Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party. Ought we to add that many secretaries would benefit by perusing the Labour Party Annual Report wherein also is contained a virtual cyclopaedia of the Labour Movement?

It may be supposed that the evil wrought by the Trades Dispute and Trade Unions Act among the affiliations to Local Parties has now reached its fullest extent. That many local affiliations have been lost as a consequence of this Act is well known and the time is ripe for a determined effort all round to get back the Branches who disaffiliated under the Act owing to lack of local political funds.

Our own observation convinces us that in many constituencies considerable affiliations that may be fairly easily obtained are being neglected. These omissions are among Unions whom we are aware possess local funds or whose affiliation fees would be paid by the Union's Head Office. Outside these evidences of bad local organisation and effort there are other Trade Union Branches in most places which, although they are without any local fund from which affiliations can be paid, might be induced to raise a fund for that purpose by voluntary means. This actually is done in many cases, and we strongly advise Local Parties to take a census of the Trades Union Branches in their locality and systematically follow up further attempts to secure their affiliation.

We have always urged that to procure and retain the interest of Trades Union Branches it is necessary to foster a close relationship between the Branches and the Party; to officially acquaint the Trades Union Branch of all special events; and to endeavour to secure reports at branch meetings of Labour Party happenings. The alliance with our industrial brothers can be cemented by attention to detail in a good many matters. There is, for instance, the frequent possibility of sending along new recruits to their appropriate Trades Union. Prominent Trades Union local officials should also be asked to identify themselves with Party endeavours and the most obvious way of doing this is to invite them to act as supplementary speakers or at least to occupy a place on the platform. There are many other courtesies which

will present themselves having the same object.

A curious instance of how delegates themselves sometimes fail to appreciate their duty or report to their branches presented itself to us the other night. At a certain Labour Party meeting it was proposed that a special meeting should be called in three weeks' time, at which the attendance of Trades Union delegates was particularly desired. The Secretary of one Branch immediately got up and contended that there would not be time for his branch to hear about the matter, for they were meeting the following night and would not meet again for another month. They would therefore not receive a communication from the Secretary and he moved that the matter be deferred to a later date. How astonishing that this Secretary did not appreciate that it was his own duty to give his Branch a report and to call attention to the proposal mentioned at the same time.

At the same meeting we heard a story concerning a certain Town Councillor, formerly an active Party worker, but who now, like so many of his kin, is utterly immersed in public duties. He was invited to speak at a Council By-election (in his own ward in fact) but regretted that every evening during the contest he was booked up in council duties and during the day he was full up with magisterial work. This was a town where "treating" is rife and our friend, anxious of course to do something, volunteered that on the night of the poll he would tour the public houses in the ward so that they should be in the way of knowing that the magisterial eye was upon them, and there must be no naughty tricks. We can imagine that it would not be difficult to secure many volunteers for a cushy job like that!

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YOUTH!

This Month's Article :

POINTS ON PUBLICITY

By W. A. PEACOCK

There appeared in the January issue of "The Labour Organiser" several articles by prominent workers in our Movement dealing with the new "Daily Herald." I hope that members of the League of Youth read them and will respond to the call to aid Wm. Mellor and his colleagues in their task of establishing a daily Labour paper which will compare favourably with its rivals.

So much has been written already about the need for a strong Labour Press, that it is hardly necessary for me to cover this ground now. What I do want to do, however, is to outline to League of Youth members how they should help the Press if they want the press to help them.

In the first place let me say something regarding local papers, since they are of particular value to local organisations. In nearly every constituency there are a number of such journals. Sometimes they claim to be "independent" and are in close alliance with the Tories or Liberals. Sometimes they are run by editor-proprietors who do not bother about politics but who are just anxious to get hold of news concerning happenings in the localities. In either case the League of Youth should endeavour to give the local paper information concerning its activities. It is possible that to large public functions the local paper will send a representative along, but in the case of smaller functions it is probably beneficial to send along a brief report.

Now in preparing this report it is well to bear in mind one or two points.

In the first place you must remember that important as the League is to you it is of little importance to the editor. To him it is but one of many other societies wanting notice in his columns. He may have plenty of sympathy with your views, but his sympathies are in the background when he reads your report. He wants news. He wants a story, and not a dull account of a gathering at which were present a number of people who are mentioned by name. It is therefore essential in sending reports to the Press to ensure that they are brief and to the point. It is useful also to see that the copy has a neat appearance. Write or type on one side of the paper with a wide margin and double-spacing between the lines is the best way in which to turn out your copy. You may think this little point of little importance. But ask the sub-editor what he thinks. It enables him to "knock the copy into shape" and to make his corrections and "cuts" with little difficulty. If your copy is badly written there are more chances of it being "spiked," i.e., ignored.

May I add it would help me if correspondents who write me in connection with "The League Bulletin" follow out this method. The other day one young friend sent me eight pages of foolscap so closely written that it was with difficulty that I found the real point of his story. It nearly went in the w.p.b.

So much then for the local paper. Should your local party have a monthly or weekly journal then approach the editor and see whether a column cannot

be given to the League. Get one of your members appointed to look after this feature and to attend generally to publicity work. It is unfair to leave everything to the poor secretary.

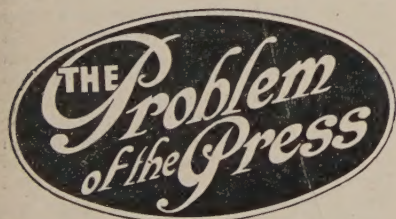
* * *

One other important point not to be forgotten is that the publications of the movement ought to be on sale at every meeting. You can obtain from the Publication Department at Transport House particulars of leaflets and pamphlets while from other sources you can obtain other literature of equal use.

Selling literature is good not only from the propaganda standpoint but from the financial aspect, too. If you can place a regular order for a quantity of any magazines—The "Labour Magazine," "Clarion," "Social Democrat," "Labour Woman," "New Leader," or "Forward," and can dispose of them you will be adding small sums regularly to your funds.

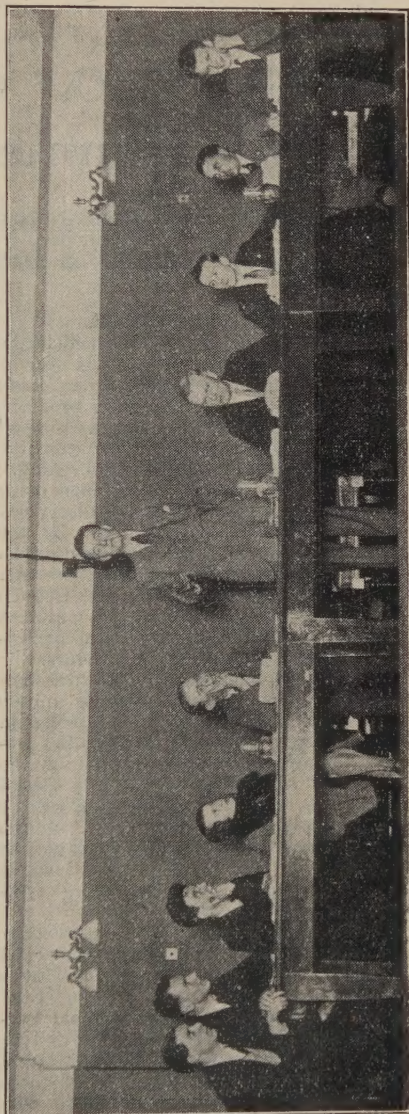
The older men and women in the Labour movement have learned after many bitter experiences the need for an effective Labour press. Let members of the League show that they know the value of the Labour press by supporting it in every way and by doing all they to further its power and influence.

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THE FIRST ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE LEAGUE OF YOUTH.

Maurice Hackett (Chairman) addressing the recent Conference.

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The "L.O." Guide to Local Government Elections

PART II.—URBAN & DISTRICT COUNCIL ELECTIONS

(Continued.)

The Hours of Poll.

As stated in last month's article the hours during which the poll is open is dependent upon an Order of the County Council, who have power to prescribe the hours of polling so long as the poll "shall always be open between the hours of six and eight in the evening."

Frantic enquiries are sometimes made at the last minute when it is discovered that the hours of poll fixed by the County Council do not meet local needs. The Extension of Polling Hours Act does not extend to District Council Elections, and no means are provided by which a candidate may on application secure any extension of hours.

Ordinarily, a County Council is not likely to be moved at the last minute to make a variation of the Order in force. In the majority of cases the predominant Conservative interest on the Council will be opposed to any special facilities, and the specious plea will be put forward that the hours of the Returning Officer's staff must not be excessive. Labour County Councils will of course be found more sympathetic.

Where it is found that the County Council Order does not meet local requirements, plans to secure an alteration need to be made a long time ahead. Resolutions from political Parties sent to the County Council cut little ice, but resolutions from the local authorities whose elections are concerned fall in a different category. The first step, therefore, should be to convert the Urban or Rural Council to the desirability of keeping the poll open for the hours required. Watch should also be kept upon this matter by Labour representatives on the County Council, with whom may lie the initiative of moving a revision of the Order in force.

It is to be remembered that where

Parish Council and District Council elections are taken at the same time and place the hours of poll must be the same for both elections. It would seem therefore that if in any case the County Council makes an Order varying the hours for these classes of election, difficulties might arise if a poll came to be taken together.

Corrupt and Illegal Practices.

Offences against election law in District Council elections are substantially the same as those we have enumerated in regard to Borough Council elections.

Broadly the offences are such as may be committed against the Ballot Act, the Municipal Corporations Act, 1882, and the Municipal Elections Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act, 1884, and of course the offence of personation, separately created.

By Statutory Rules and Orders made under the Local Government Act, 1894, various "adaptations, alterations and exceptions" are made in applying these Acts to District Council elections. But such adaptations in practice are not very far-reaching as regards election offences, though there are one or two changes to which we must refer.

While one polling agent may be employed for payment at each station in Parliamentary and Municipal Elections, the number is curtailed in District Council Elections (see page 21, "Labour Organiser," 1930), and it is an offence to employ more than the number so limited.

In Rural District Council elections the Statutory Rules and Orders permit a relaxation of Section 16 of the Municipal Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Practices) Act, 1884, regarding the use of licensed premises for election purposes. In Borough Council and Urban Council elections licensed premises must not be used either as Committee

Rooms or for the purpose of holding public meetings (see page 192, "Labour Organiser," October, 1929). In the areas of Rural Councils licensed premises may be used for the purposes of a public meeting and the law is obviously actuated by a consideration of the fact that alternative premises are frequently not available.

Any petition arising out of a District Council Election must be lodged within a period of six weeks after the day of Election. The security which may be demanded of a petitioner is reduced from the maximum of £500 required for a Borough Election petition to the amount of £50 unless an order is obtained that "the sum shall be to a lesser amount or . . . not exceeding £300."

Election Expenses.

A candidate at a district council election is under no limitation as to the amount he may spent nor is he required to make a return of his expenses. Notwithstanding this he must not incur any of the prohibited expenses or be guilty of illegal payment or illegal employment or hiring. We are of the opinion that this liberty is liable to abuse and that a limitation of expenses and a return of same ought to be compulsory in all elections.

A curious position is created by the manner in which the above dispensation is enacted. The Municipal Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Practices) Act, 1884, Section 37, exempted certain classes of elections from certain provisions of the Act. Such elections are contained in the First Schedule to that Act; and the Local Government Act, 1894, ordained that District Council Elections shall be deemed to be included in the said schedule.

It is the wording then of Section 37 with which we are concerned and this reads:—

"The provisions of this Act which prohibit the payment of any sum, and the incurring of any expense by or on behalf of a candidate at an election, on account of, or in respect of, the conduct or management of the election, and those which relate to the time for sending in and paying claims, and those which relate to the maximum amount of election expenses, or the return or declaration respecting election expenses, shall not apply to any of the elections mentioned in the First Schedule to this Act."

Analysing this out it will be noted

that the elections mentioned in the Schedule are exempted from those provisions of the Act

- (a) which prohibit the payment of any sum;
- (b) and the incurring of any expense by or on behalf of a candidate at an election on account of or in respect of the conduct or management of the election;
- (c) and those which relate to the time of sending in and paying claims;
- (d) and those which relate to the maximum amount of election expenses or the return of declaration respecting the election expenses.

When one turns to the body of the Act it is somewhat disconcerting to find that the offences of illegal payment and illegal employment are created by wording much the same as that just quoted, and it can be argued that such offences do not exist in regard to district council elections. While we hold that this is unfortunately the state of the law as it stands, there has, so far as we know, been no test of the matter, and we consider it safer therefore to advise our readers that these offences should be regarded as still existent in regard to district council elections — and rightly so.

It should be remembered that the Act does not relieve any candidate of the obligation to rebut any charge based on the improper use of money, and therefore the provisions which exempt a candidate from presenting election accounts should not be taken as exempting him also from the necessity of keeping proper books of account.

The following circular, having reference to this year's elections, has been addressed by the Home Office to clerks of Urban and Rural District Councils. The final paragraph is of special interest to our readers:—

"I am directed by the Secretary of State to draw attention to the times for the proceedings in connection with the forthcoming ordinary elections of Urban and Rural District Councillors in the present year, which will be held in accordance with the Urban District Councillors Election Order, 1898, and the Rural District Councillors Election Order, 1898, as amended by the Local Elections (Alteration of Rules) Order, 1925.

"The latest dates for the proceedings, as provided in the First Schedule to the Orders of 1898, are as follows:—

1. Notice of election — Friday, 14th March.
2. Receipt of nomination papers — Thursday, 20th March (noon).
3. Sending notice of decision as to validity of nomination papers—Friday, 21st March.
4. Making out statement as to persons nominated—Saturday, 22nd March.
5. Withdrawal of candidates—Tuesday, 25th March (noon).
6. Notice of poll—Tuesday, 1st April, if day of election is 7th April.
7. Day of election — Monday, 7th April (or such other day not being earlier than Saturday, 5th April, or later than Wednesday, 9th April, as may for special reasons be fixed by the County Council).

"The Returning Officer will of course, in selecting his assistants at the election, give priority to persons out of work so far as this is practicable, and the Secretary of State suggests that, as is now the practice at Parliamentary elections, the Returning Officer should notify any positions to be filled, with particulars of the duties and the qualifications required, to the nearest Employment Exchange, the local branches of the Ex-Service Men's organisations and similar bodies, so that they may submit names for consideration if they have suitable persons to propose."

(To be continued.)

(Concluded from Page 49.)

to ask for an account specifying particulars in plenty of time. If he is dissatisfied with his account he should pay what is reasonable and sufficient, and place any difference among the disputed accounts. Failure to stand up to School Managers in this matter is merely to whittle away the privilege conferred by Parliament.

We are sometimes asked what is the position of an expense incurred in paying for any damage, particularly where the account is rendered or payment demanded after the Statutory period for proper payment of claims. This matter fortunately presents little difficulty because payment for such damage is not strictly an election expense. Where any such payment can be returned this, of course, should be done, but otherwise it is legitimate to treat the payment as something not connected with the ordinary conduct and management of the election.

RUNNING A SMALL BAZAAR.

In the January "Labour Organiser" an article appeared under the title of "A £3,000 Labour Bazaar." Now this is a staggering figure to many local Labour Parties whose annual income rarely exceeds £100. But even a small Local Labour Party can organise and run a successful bazaar. The Heanor Local Labour Party have organised seven such efforts, and our net profits have been :—

			£	s.	d.
1922	...	...	60	0	0
1923	...	...	51	18	8½
1924	...	...	50	2	7
1925	...	...	70	13	0
1927	...	...	65	10	0
1928	...	...	58	8	10
1929	...	...	64	18	10

and our expenses upon each occasion have never exceeded £10, and upon the last occasion were under £7.

HOW WE WORK.

From the General Meeting we elect a Bazaar Committee, which is composed as follows:—One member from each of the Ward Committees, Women's Sections and League of Youth, together with the president and secretary of the Local Labour Party. This Committee is entrusted with the whole question of organising a successful bazaar.

Each Ward Committee, Women's Section, and the League of Youth are invited to have a stall, and they are responsible for what that stall contains.

Thrift-tickets are issued well in advance of the actual date of the bazaar, and we have a rule that all tickets sold must be accounted for in cash at the close of the bazaar.

On the occasion of our last, which we called the "Victory Rainbow Bazaar," we issued a souvenir programme. This consisted of sixteen pages of advertisements, etc., enclosed in a fancy cover—and upon these alone we made a profit of £4.

Bazaars are splendid functions for keeping your workers together, and I would advise all secretaries of Local Labour Parties to give serious consideration towards organising a bazaar.

I shall only be too pleased to forward a programme to anyone enclosing a 1½d. stamp, and any advice I can give will be willingly given. Address letters: Coun. L. Shipley, 10, Ella Bank Road, Heanor, Nottingham.

Bazaars mean work—but working for the Labour Movement is a pleasure.

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A PROGRAMME OF ELECTORAL REFORM

By THE EDITOR (*Continued*).

Election Procedure (*Continued*).

The provision of polling stations and the method of enforcing a more liberal and satisfactory distribution of same, leaves much to be desired at the present time. The procedure is cumbersome and takes many months to bring into operation, and there is no remedy for a candidate who only discovers the shortness of polling stations at the time of his contest. This position might be remedied by a provision allowing candidates (at any rate in the more important elections) a right of appeal to the County Court Judge of the district against any unsatisfactory distribution of stations. The C.C. Judge, whose local knowledge is generally considerable, should have power to order further polling stations.

In Rural Districts it should be compulsory to set up a station for at least every two hundred and fifty electors. The present provisions merely stipulate for a separate compartment for every one hundred and fifty electors.

The Poll.

The question of how to accommodate voters debarred by their employment or other circumstances from voting at their proper station is a vexed one. The extension of polling by post is not to be commended. This method strikes at the root of the secrecy of the ballot and is open to grave abuse. The travelling polling station on the other hand seems to us merely a stunt; unworkable in many areas, open always to grave abuses, and, without compulsory polling, likely in the long run to keep as many people from the poll as it accommodates on its tours.

We favour a plan in operation in Australia which enables an elector to poll at any station in the country on making an appropriate declaration. Such votes as these are dispatched to a central clearing house after the close of the poll and in practice would reach their proper constituency two days later. The effect of the adoption of this proposal would be to delay the counting two days. In view of the fact that a former Act imposed a delay of eight days before the counting of the poll, and that this was the practice for several years, there appears to be no grave objection to the course mentioned.

As our readers are aware considerable variation of practice exists at different elections regarding the appointment and number of polling agents. We consider that uniformity in this direction is desirable and that each candidate should be entitled to nominate a representative at every polling station.

As regards the method of voting it will perhaps come as a surprise to some of our readers in the towns to realise that voting by show of hands still exists at Parish meetings. That this procedure should exist in the very places where the Squire and Parson may be expected to exercise their strongest influence is a tribute to the astuteness of the Conservative authors of the Local Government Act, 1894. Such procedure obviously requires a change.

It is not less astonishing that the electors of 1930, twenty-eight or twenty-nine million in number, should apparently be content with the method of taking the poll which was thought adequate for the small electorates that obtained at the passing of the Ballot Act in 1872.

To our mind it is literally astounding that in these days of adding and book-keeping machines of all kinds there should as yet be no public demand for the abolition of the cumbersome and unsatisfactory scraps of paper by which the vote of the people is at present taken.

We are all for the introduction of machine voting and counting. We suggest that in any amendment of the law, power should be taken to secure the introduction of machines by Order in Council. It should then become the business of the Ministry to seek for suitable types of machines and having secured same, and subjected them to test, they should be forthwith introduced in all elections. We have no fear but that an adequate and foolproof machine could be introduced in a very short period. Naturally each machine would not only record the vote but count the respective totals for each candidate.

In the meantime, and until the introduction of voting machines, certain amendments of the Ballot Act rules are necessary. The discretion of the Presiding Officer as to allowing persons

other than single voters in the place set apart for voting should be removed and a penalty should be imposed where it is shown as a fact that the marking of a paper can be observed by the Presiding Officer or from any other point of vantage in or outside the room.

We are equally in favour of far more stringent regulations regarding the count. So long as ballot papers are used the method of counting them should not be at the discretion of the R.O. but should be prescribed.

The number of counting agents allowed to each candidate at present lies at the discretion of the R.O. It is advisable that each candidate should be allotted a fixed number having a definite relation to the number of official counters—says one candidate's counting agent to every two official counters, and it should be laid down that counting should take place under the observation of such candidates' agents as may be present. We have known instances of the candidates' counters being herded at one end of the room where it was absolutely impossible for them to observe or challenge the papers.

Considerable ambiguity often exists regarding a recount. Actually candidates and their agents have no right to demand a recount however unsatisfactory the counting may have been. We are of the opinion that the right to demand a recount should be given to every candidate, who shows to the satisfaction of the Returning Officer that he has reasonable ground to doubt the accuracy of the count in any particular.

We would stress, however, far more strongly that a right should be given to a candidate to demand a scrutiny in every case where it is shown that the number of spoilt or tendered votes equal or exceed the plurality by which any candidate would otherwise be declared elected. Such scrutiny should be a simple matter, and should take place before the County Court Judge of the district, and the expenses thereof be chargeable as a part of the returning officers' expenses. This procedure would remove a grave source of dissatisfaction in cases where majorities are small.

The custody of Ballot boxes at present leaves much to be desired, and only in the later classes of elections has any attention been paid to the matter. The Ballot Act overlooks the custody of the ballot boxes in the interim between the ballot and the count, though the Statutory Rules and Orders governing cer-

tain Local Government elections refer to the matter. We have heard of grave abuses regarding the custody of election papers and ballot boxes after the poll in Parliamentary elections in rural districts, and whether the poll is to be taken as at present or by machine voting proper custody of the implements and papers ought to be provided for.

Election Petitions.

We have already mentioned the propriety of giving the right to a scrutiny where the spoilt and tendered papers equal any candidate's majority of votes.

We are of the opinion that the costs of election petitions ought to be a charge on public funds from the moment that any petitioner proves to the satisfaction of an appropriate Court that he has a *prima facie* case.

We also propose that Local Government petitions should be heard in the County Court of the district. Parliamentary petitions should be heard by Judges on Circuit instead of by special election judges.

The proposals just made obviously embrace the abolition of the present harsh restrictions on petitioners relating to deposits for expenses.

Miscellaneous.

Under this heading there are several matters that can be conveniently mentioned.

The payment, or reimbursement of expenses, for members of local governing bodies is a crying reform, and until enacted really democratic and representative elected bodies are not to be had in this country.

In the interests of democracy we also object to the anachronism which admits of Aldermen in Borough Councils and County Councils. The whole history of Urban Councils would go to show that these bodies have performed their functions admirably without the incubus of Aldermen, and in many cases the areas and population covered by District Councils far exceed those of many Borough Councils.

The assimilation of the City of London Corporation in the rest of London Government is an overdue change that must be embodied in any expression of a Labour ideal on electoral reform. We are well aware of the storm that such proposal would evoke, but the time is approaching when the wealth of the City of London must be made to contribute its fair share to the upkeep of the rest of the County of London.

Next month—*Corrupt and Illegal Practices.*



LAW AND PRACTICE



The Use of Schoolrooms at Election Times.

Letters reach us from time to time which indicate that a good deal of misconception exists concerning the free use of Schoolrooms at election times.

Prior to 1918 no provision whatever existed to facilitate the use of schoolrooms by either Parliamentary or Local Government candidates although enactments did provide for the compulsory use of schools for the purpose of taking the poll at certain elections.

The Representation of the People Act, 1918, contains in Section 25 the following provisions:—

“A candidate at a Parliamentary election (other than a university election) shall be entitled, for the purpose of holding a public meeting in furtherance of his candidature, to the use at reasonable times between the receipt of a writ for the election and the day of the poll, of a suitable room in any public elementary school situated within the constituency for which he is a candidate:

“Provided that this enactment shall not authorise the use of any room used as part of a private dwelling-house nor authorise any interference with the school hours of an elementary day or evening school.

“A charge may be made to cover any actual and necessary expenses incurred by the local education authority, or by the managers of the school, in respect of the preparation of the room before the meeting for the purposes of the meeting, and after the meeting for school purposes, and for warming, lighting and cleaning the room.

“If by reason of the use of any room under this Act any damage is done to the school-house, or to the furniture, fittings, or apparatus, the damage shall be defrayed by the person by whom, or on whose behalf, the meeting is convened.”

In Scotland the expression “any elementary school” means any school in receipt of a Parliamentary grant. Why this should be so for Scotland and not for the rest of the country it is difficult to understand.

It should be noted that the above provisions apply only to Parliamentary elections. No provision whatever exists in any Act to compel the letting of schools in Local Government Elections and this matter urgently requires reform.

The provisions we have quoted are also about as unsatisfactory as they can well be. It will be noted that no express remedy is provided where the management of the school refuses the facilities provided by law and in any case the section applies to elementary schools and not to secondary schools.

Everyone who has had any experience of elections and has attempted to take advantage of the law as it stands will have come across obstruction and attempts to defeat the object of the Act. The management of Church Schools are generally the worst offenders in this respect.

The “use at reasonable times” is a phrase which leaves much to the discretion of the school managers, but it does not justify any managers in saying that they will let the school once or twice only to each Party. The question of the number of times any particular candidate may desire to use a school is in our opinion a matter entirely outside the cognisance of the Managers provided the application otherwise complies with the requirements of the section.

On the other hand it might reasonably be argued that where a candidate desired to secure the whole of the accommodation to the exclusion of the other candidates who had also applied the School Managers would be justified in interpreting the phrase quoted so as

to secure equity between the candidates.

The greater source of trouble, however, seems to centre round the charges made by avaricious Managers. The prohibitive charges normally made in many districts for the use of country schoolrooms is notorious and it is common knowledge that the object of high charges is frequently to discourage the activities of Labour candidates. The compulsion to let the schools for the period between the receipt of the writ and the day of the poll is something often only grudgingly conceded and frequently accompanied by an outrageous charge for warming, heating and cleaning, etc. We know an instance where a room incapable of seating more than forty people and at which neither lighting, cleaning nor heating was attempted was priced as high as £3 for a single meeting. Parsons, in particular, with all their intricate knowledge of the Scriptures seem incapable of understanding the plain wording of an Act which prohibits them from making charges other than for the services specified.

In all cases any charge made must merely be *reimbursement* of reasonable expenses actually defrayed by the Managers of the School, or at any rate a reasonable computation of the actual expenditure under the various heads.

A convenient practice exists in relation to Council Schools in some areas where the education authority lays down a flat rate covering charges that are to be made for the necessary services in all schools under its control. Even so in some cases we fear the charges are unnecessarily high and in our opinion an election agent, notwithstanding any resolution or stipulation of an education authority, is entitled to an account where he suspects that the charge made is unreasonable. We view with considerable concern the indifference of some election agents amply supplied with money who do not make a sufficiently strong stand against improper charges.

It will be noted that the section not only fails to provide a remedy for an unreasonable refusal of a schoolroom, but it affords no guide as to an agent's proper course of action when an excessive charge is made. But the term "actual and necessary expenses incurred" has a specific meaning and where an election agent is charged more than is reasonable his remedy is

(Continued on Page 44.)

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REGISTRATION 1930.

The following circular has been addressed by the Home Office to Registration Officers:—

"I am directed by the Secretary of State to say that he has had under consideration the procedure to be followed in the preparation of the register of electors which will be made up in respect of the qualifying period of three months ending on the 1st June and will come into force on the 15th October, 1930.

"In connection with the preparation of the current register the Secretary of State directed (see the Circular of 27th August, 1928) that the Forms 'A' or 'D' should be delivered at all premises in the course of the house to house inquiry, in order that the particulars supplied to the canvassers might be supplemented by returns made by the occupiers. As the qualifying period for the current register ended on the 1st December, 1928, eighteen months will elapse between the two registers and the number of additions to and changes to be recorded in the new register will no doubt be very numerous. In the circumstances, the Secretary of State, after consultation with Registration Officers and Agents from the Central Offices of the three political parties has come to the conclusion that on the present occasion also it is important that the canvass should be supplemented by returns from householders and occupiers. Accordingly, he directs that the Registration Officer shall arrange for the appropriate Form of return to be delivered at all premises in the course of the house to house inquiry.

"I am to add that the Forms have been modified in a few details and that supplies will be obtained on demand from the Stationery Office, who should be notified as early as possible of the requirements of the Registration Officer."

The revised forms for delivery to householders mentioned in the above circular have now been prescribed by Statutory Rules and Orders, 1930, No. 55 (published as an R.P. leaflet, No. R.P. 140, price 1d.). The new forms differ only in detail from those already known to our readers, and to every householder, the principal alterations being designed to make clearer the position of persons attaining the age of twenty-one on or before the last day of the qualifying period. To avoid mis-

apprehension the following words are added to the instructions for filling in the form:—

"A naval or military voter cannot be registered as a Parliamentary elector in respect of actual residence unless he makes a claim in the prescribed form."

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THE "LANCASTER FORWARD."

Our readers have on two or three occasions had brought to their notice that admirable publication, the "Lancaster Forward." This local paper has easily taken first place among the publications printed on a duplicator—and there are several really good monthlies of this character. We have always admired the get-up and high technical skill illustrated by this paper, which has been equally distinguished by the good quality of its reading matter. We therefore welcome the following paragraphs by Mr. W. J. Simpson, the Labour Agent, giving an insight into the History of the "Lancaster Forward":—

Through the hum of machinery, 'neath the cold imprint of a printer's press, romance weaves the thread of many a gallant endeavour. An epic thread has been woven through the

"Lancaster Forward. In 1926, members of the Scotforth Labour League, started to scale the Olympian heights in publishing the first Labour monthly in a Division where feudalism sits close to modernity. A few stalwarts, of fine faith and bounding courage, began to talk about the project. Talk fashioned out the idea. Funds were raised—a Gestetner, a typewriter, reams of duplicating paper—constituted the printer's press. The publishing office—a room above a "cobbler's" shop! And in that duplicated form it was issued in September, 1926.

The infinite amount of labour involved in that production can hardly be understood by the reader, perhaps. To the tapping of the typewriter, the "clicking" of the "stitcher," the revolving of the Gestetner, the "Forward" sent its first message. The "cobbler's" room meant work, but it meant the finer thing—the true comradeship of selfless service. Discarded stencils curtained the windows, and draped the walls. Comrades, after the stress of a day's toil, laboured in the production to the early hours of the morning. Others tramped miles in distributing copies. These days are past, but memories remain. The work of those days made the friendships of a life-time.

In January, 1928, the "Forward" was placed in the hands of the printer, and published in an eight-page royal 4to form. In this form it continued

until the Election period of 1929, when owing to the firm which supplied the inset going out of business, a little crisis arose. Not desiring to lose the propaganda worth of a circulation which had been steadily built up, and being faced with an economic proposition, it was decided to reduce the paper to a four-page (with inset) selling at a penny. Circulation slightly dropped as a result of the forced change. The reduced size eliminated local matter, and so, in December, 1929, further consultations took place, when it was decided that the paper should become the official organ of the Divisional Labour Party, and that in a new form again it should appear as a 16-pp. crown 4to, selling at twopence.

The whole matter is now locally written—contains "Book Review"; "Woman's Page," "Kiddies' Korner," special articles, and general political news, and matters of local interest. There will be no fortunes (in cash) therein, but certainly, it is believed, a wealth of value and stimulus to the work of the Movement. Other comrades may take a lesson and encouragement from the history of the "Lancaster Forward." Those who build in 1926 build better than they knew. It is to be hoped that their building will be built upon with growing grace and utility. Any information thought helpful would be gladly given to those who fain would glimpse the stars in the production of a paper to carry aloft the message of Socialism.



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QUESTIONS ANSWERED HERE

Membership Cards and Local Contributions.

Question. Ours is a county with twenty-three Local Parties and Committees. The National Labour Party will not supply any of these Local Parties with membership cards and we find that all the membership cards must be obtained through us as the Divisional Party, and we have got to pay for them in advance. I wish you would explain in the "Labour Organiser" how this is going to work out as between us and the Local Parties. All our Local Parties and Committees in the past have collected membership fees and remitted us fifty per cent. of the contributions. Our members do not all pay the same, in some Parties they pay a shilling per year but other Local Parties have started the penny per week scheme. It may be months before we get paid for membership cards ourselves, for of course we shall get paid when the Local Parties send to us our portion of the members' contributions. If you can give us some guidance in an early issue we shall be greatly obliged.

Answer. In the first place our friends must understand that in respect of every member of the Party an affiliation fee is due to the Head Office of the Party. This year the amount is threepence per member. We presume that in the past the Divisional Party has been in the habit of paying its affiliation fee towards the end of the year, after it has received the fees from the Local Parties—quite possibly the affiliation fee to the National Labour Party would not reach Headquarters in the year for which it was due.

An alteration has been made the effect of which is to alter the old method of affiliation to Headquarters. Previously Headquarters possessed no check on the figures supplied by Local

Parties, and it was wholly dependent on them as to the time when the Local Party chose to pay its dues. Quite often the experience has been that Headquarters were the last persons to be paid and there is overwhelming proof that a great leakage did actually take place.

Under the new method no person can claim individual membership of the Labour Party unless possessed of a membership card. These cards are supplied by the Head Office of the Party only, and by fixing the price of the card to Divisional Parties at threepence payment for the card is made to effect the purpose of affiliation. In actual fact the cards are free and the threepence paid for them is accepted as the national fee due in respect of each member.

It is perfectly true that by stipulating for cash payment for the card Head Office now secured payment in advance of its affiliation fees, and we know of no reason why this should not be as defensible as that the money should always be in arrear and sometimes never paid at all. National needs are indeed very great and the upkeep of the Party is becoming more and more dependent on the fees paid by Divisional Parties. We understand that in exceptional cases some relaxation is made, but the general rule is that the cards should be paid for as secured, and Divisional Parties procure supplies from time to time as needed to cope with the growth and strength of their membership.

Of course it would be very unfair for our correspondent's Divisional Party if they had to accept the new relationship with Headquarters, and at the same time continue their old relationship with their Local Parties. It is obvious that a change must be made in the constituency, and each Local Party and Committee must be given to understand

that in future they must compute the number of cards they require for their members, and pay to the Divisional Party in advance, at least such amount of the fees that will be due from them as will equal the amount required for the cards.

Our correspondent says that in the past fifty per cent. of the income from membership fees has been paid to the Divisional Party, but he does not say whether this is in addition to the national affiliation fee which previously has been twopence per member. We are afraid that in making local arrangements for the apportionment of fees the point mentioned is often overlooked.

On this matter it is of interest to quote what is said concerning the apportionment of members' fees by the model Rules of the Party. The rules applicable in this case are Set "C" Clause 8 (2) which reads:—

"Of the contributions collected from Individual Members by this Party, 4d. per individual member per annum, or such other charge as may be laid down by the National Annual Party Conference, shall be forwarded by the appropriate officer of this Party to the Financial Secretary of the

Constituency Labour Party in payment of a supply of Membership Cards provided by the National Executive Committee. On the completion of each quarter, the appropriate officer of this Party shall pay to the Financial Secretary of the Constituency Labour Party a sum equivalent to 50 per cent. of the contributions of Individual Members received by him during the quarter, after the sum paid for Membership Cards has been deducted therefrom."

For the present year our friend may read 3d. instead of 4d. in the Rule as quoted.

Printer's Imprint.

Question. Will you please acquaint me in your valuable paper whether the printer's imprint must go on the election literature published in connection with the R.D.C. elections? I am not sure about this and there is another point in this matter I would like enlightenment on. We frequently issue leaflets during the year and active propaganda matter. I have read somewhere that people can be prosecuted unless there is a printer's imprint on everything published. I often see that this law is not observed, but I should like to be on the right side and know what the position really is.

Answer. Yes, the printer's imprint must go on every "bill, placard or poster" having reference to a Local Government Election, to which the Municipal Elections Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act, 1884, applies. The name and address of the printer and publisher is required and any person printing, publishing or posting, or causing to be printed, published or posted any bill, poster or placard without the required imprint is liable to a fine of £100. If the candidate is himself guilty his act constitutes an illegal practice which, in addition to the fine, may involve him in the loss of his seat and a period of incapacity. It will be noted that not every election document must bear the imprint. The law merely strikes at what may be disseminated and at providing a means by which the disseminator of wrongful statements can be traced. Canvass cards, letter headings and such stationery do not require an imprint, though if the letter headings are used for circulars the documents would then probably become "bills" and the imprint would be wanted. The safer thing with all election literature is to see that the imprint appears on everything.

As to the other part of our correspondent's query it is enacted by the Newspapers, Printers and Reading Rooms Repeal Act, 1869, that:—

"Every person who shall print any paper or book meant to be published or dispersed, and who shall not print upon the front of every such paper, if printed on one side only, or upon the first or last leaf of every paper or book consisting of more than one leaf, in legible characters, his name and usual place of abode or business; and every person who shall publish or disperse, or assist in publishing or dispersing, any printed paper or book on which the name and place of abode of the person printing the same shall not be printed as aforesaid shall be liable for a penalty."

The penalty is the extraordinary one of £5 for every copy of such paper. It is perfectly true that this Act is not often evoked but we have a recollection of prosecutions under the Act within recent years, and indeed it has proved a very useful if unjust weapon in the hands of the police when they have chosen to prosecute some person for publishing matter of which they disapprove. The safest course would be to insist on the printer's imprint being placed on all leaflets and matter intended for the general public.

CHAIRMANSHIP AT ELECTION MEETINGS.

(Continued.)

By MR. C. L. GIBBONS, *Edinburgh*

These interval remarks are perhaps the most important of the chairman's utterances, for upon them depend the (a) amount of the collection; (b) the number of workers; (c) the volume of literature sales and the attention paid to Election literature; (d) the degree of usefulness and order of the question period. When there is more than one speaker these remarks, or at least those relating to the collection, workers and literature, are best made immediately after the best speaker has ended his speech. The appeal for a collection should never be omitted from an election meeting programme, whether the meeting is held inside or outside. The response to the appeal will depend almost wholly upon the *matter* and the *manner* in which it is delivered.

The points to mention are :—

- (1) That the campaign is a costly one.
- (2) That we are opposed by wealthy opponents.
- (3) That they have used their political power to cripple us financially.
- (4) That, nevertheless, we can defeat their wealth and influence if we make the effort.
- (5) Impress upon the audience they have had an interesting and instructive time.
- (6) Say you know that they are anxious to show their appreciation of it in a material form.
- (7) Ask the stewards to go round with the boxes.

Two or three points if attended to will ensure a better collection than if they are unattended to. 1. Use official-looking boxes or bags; 2. Have your collectors working from front to centre and back of centre. It is not advisable to take "retiring" collections at election meetings.

After the collection should come the appeal for active workers, an appeal very nearly as important as that for a collection. In making this appeal stress the following points:—1. That against the wealth of our opponents we can oppose our enthusiastic and voluntary service for the Labour Cause; 2. That there is a vast amount of work to be done if we are to win; 3. That no matter how humble our capacity

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there is a job we can all do which will help to get our candidate in; 4. That there are Service Slips in every seat or available from the stewards; 5. Please fill these in and hand them in to the stewards or to the Committee Room. The Labour Party "What Will I Do?" card is a very useful service card for this purpose. [And was first introduced in the pages of the "L.O."—Ed. "L.O."]

Now as to Announcements. It is not wise to make these while the collection is being taken, as is sometimes done, unless the audience is a very small one, and time is very limited.

At election time it is advisable to exclude any announcement not connected with your campaign. In making them ensure that you state distinctly—day, time and place of meeting, and if possible the speakers and their subjects. But don't give details of too many forthcoming events, or there will be a danger of them being confused or forgotten by the audience.

After announcements comes the recommendation of literature. Here again it is wise to recommend only, or at least, chiefly Election literature. Under this heading come 1. Election leaflets; 2. Election pamphlets; 3. Party newspapers, etc. With regard to election leaflets these should be placed in the seats before the meeting at indoor meetings and at outdoor meetings should be handed round. A special appeal to the audience should be made by the chairman to read the leaflets carefully and hand them round to other people and pass the information they contain on to their friends.

In distributing or selling literature certain points must be attended to particularly (a) sell the special pamphlets and papers while the audience is assembling; (b) at outdoor meetings keep your distributors or salesmen on the edge of the crowd all the time; (c) instruct them to give or offer their literature quietly to all newcomers but not to *pester* them; (d) at indoor meetings have your literature stall where it will not block the exits but where every person entering and leaving can see it; (e) allow someone to boost the literature for two or three minutes while the audience is assembling; (f) slip an election leaflet into the pages of the Party papers to be offered for sale.

The last part of the chairman's interval remarks relate to Questions and Discussion.

It is not usual for Discussion to be allowed at an election meeting but questions should always be invited. Before taking questions the chairman should lay down the conditions which are to govern them. He should first state how much time is available for questions. This will give people an idea of which question to ask out of several they may wish to ask. Questioners should be asked to make their questions brief. A tactful warning should be given against the introduction of personalities, and they should be immediately ruled out of order if introduced. If a speaker has spoken upon a specific subject it is necessary to request that all questions be relevant to the subject of the speaker's address. But an exception to this should be made in the case of the candidate to whom the audience should be allowed to put any question appertaining to the political situation so long as it is not personal. It is also advisable to insist that no person shall be allowed a second question until everyone who wishes to do so has asked a first. This prevents people entrapping a speaker by a following-up question.

It is also advisable to insist that no person shall be allowed a second question until everyone who wishes to do so has asked a first.

Now a few remarks about the "closing duties" of the Chairman. These should commence without delay after the question period is over. The cardinal rule is *BE BRIEF*. An audience by this time is sure to be tired, and many will be anxious to get away quickly.

Prolonged closing proceedings lead to the meeting breaking up in an undignified manner. At an indoor meeting the chairman's closing remarks should be.

1. Move a vote of confidence in the candidate.
2. Put it to the meeting.
3. Appeal for support on Polling Day.
4. Remind those desiring of volunteering of the service slips.
5. Remind the audience of the literature.
6. Wish them Good-night.

At outdoor meetings the Chairman's closing the same remarks are required, except perhaps the vote of confidence in the candidate. A vote of confidence should not be asked for where you are pretty certain it won't be carried.

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